

Since the *Ornament* provides more explanations of the path of seeing and the path of meditation in subsequent topics, the expositions presented here are quite short. Panchen Sonam Drakpa provides only one paragraph of explanation in his *General Meaning* with no further elucidation.

Haribhadra's *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*, Gyaltsab je's *Ornament of the Essence*, and Lama Tsongkhapa's *Golden Rosary* are also very brief in their presentations of the two topics. The translation of these presentations is available in Handouts 14, 20, and 21.

THE PATH OF SEEING

As mentioned above, the path of seeing is presented under the following outline:

1. Instructions on the antidote to intellectually acquired objects of elimination

The criterion for having entered the Mahayana path of seeing is the achievement of the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight and that realizes emptiness *directly*. Thus, the first moment of the path of seeing is a yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes the lack of true existence of all phenomena. It is a non-dualistic path because it is free of the appearance of true existence, the appearance of conventional truths, and the sense that the subject (the meditative equipoise) and its object (emptiness) are separate and cut off. So for this yogic direct perceiver, all appearances of subject and object have become indistinguishable, like water being poured into water. Furthermore, the first moment of the path of seeing completely eliminates – in one single meditative session – the coarsest level of afflictive obstructions: the *intellectually acquired* afflictive obstructions.

When they reach the path of seeing, Bodhisattvas also achieve the first Bodhisattva bhumi. As explained before, the Mahayana path of seeing and the Mahayana path of meditation are categorized into ten Bodhisattva bhumis. The first bhumi consists of two parts: (1) the first bhumi that pertains to the path of seeing and (2) the first bhumi that pertains to the path of meditation. The reason for this twofold division of the first bhumi is that practitioners proceed to the second bhumi only *after* they have entered the path of meditation. Hence Bodhisattvas who *newly* attain the path of meditation are still on the first bhumi. Thereafter they gradually proceed through the remaining nine bhumis, which are all on the path of meditation.

Moreover, the path of seeing is also the first of the three Arya paths/superior paths (the other two being the path of meditation and the path of no-more-learning) and Mahayana practitioners who have achieved this path are now Arya Bodhisattvas. Therefore, from the path of seeing onwards, all the paths that do not directly realize emptiness in the continuum of an Arya Bodhisattva are conjoined with the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness. This means that even when the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness lies dormant, it affects those other paths, such as Bodhicitta, great compassion, the practice of the perfection of generosity, and so forth, by enhancing their capacity and strength.

Regarding the etymology of the path of seeing, since this path is obtained when Bodhisattvas are able to generate the wisdom that is able to *see* or *directly realize* emptiness, it is called the path of *seeing*.

However, since Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing are not always absorbed in the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness but also arise from the meditative equipoise in order to accumulate merit by practicing the six perfections, and so forth, the path of seeing can be categorized into two types of paths:

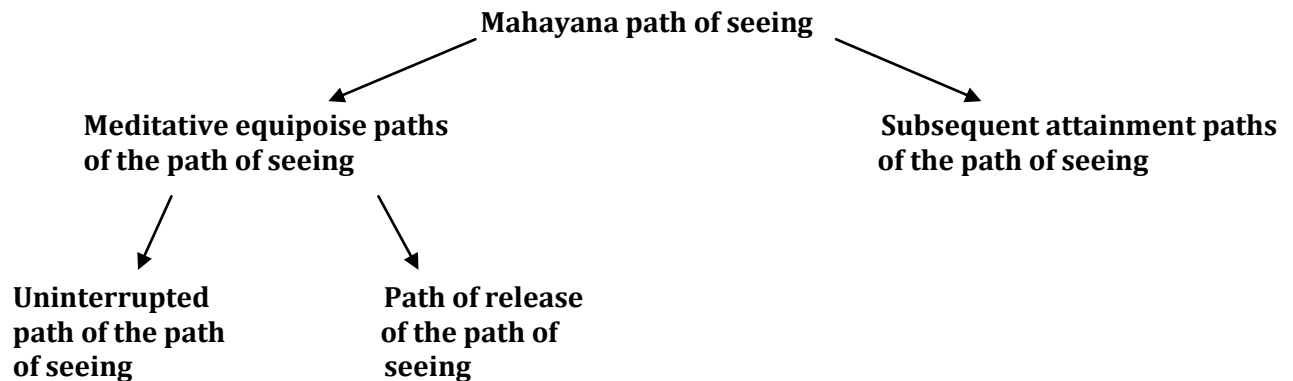
- i. The meditative equipoise paths of the path of seeing (or literally: the *exalted wisdom* of the meditative equipoise of the path of seeing)
- ii. The subsequent attainment paths of the path of seeing (or literally: the *exalted wisdom* of the subsequent attainment of the path of seeing)

i. The meditative equipoise paths of the path of seeing

The first moment of the meditative equipoise path of the path of seeing and the first moment of the path of seeing are equivalent. The meditative equipoise path of the path of seeing refers to the path of seeing that directly realizes the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena. It is a non-dual awareness, for, as mentioned above, to such an awareness all appearances of subject and object become inseparable, like water being poured into water.

That meditative equipoise can be further subdivided into two types:

- 1) The uninterrupted path of the path of seeing
 - 2) The path of release of the path of seeing
- Both are meditative equipoise paths that directly realize emptiness.



1) *The uninterrupted path of the path of seeing*

In general, whatever is an uninterrupted path is necessarily a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and that eliminates particular objects of elimination, i.e. any of the afflictive or cognitive obstructions. It is called 'uninterrupted' because this meditative equipoise remains present, without interruption or intervals, until whatever obstructions it is to eliminate are eliminated. The moment they are eliminated and the cessation of the particular obstructions is achieved, the uninterrupted path becomes a path of release.

Furthermore, whatever is an uninterrupted path is necessarily either a path of seeing or a path of meditation.

In the case of the Mahayana path of seeing, the uninterrupted path is a meditative equipoise which is the direct antidote to the objects of abandonments of the path of seeing, i.e. *intellectually acquired* afflictive obstructions, since it irrevocably eliminates those obstructions.

Please note that the following awarenesses are equivalent: the first moment of the Mahayana path of seeing, the first moment of the *uninterrupted path* of the Mahayana path of seeing, and the first moment of the first Bodhisattva bhumi/ground.

2) *The path of release of the path of seeing*

In general, a path of release is a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and that arises immediately after an uninterrupted path. As mentioned above, it arises when the obstructions (to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path) *are eliminated*, i.e. when the elimination or cessation of those obstructions is attained.

It is called 'path of *release*' because it is released or freed from whatever objects of abandonment were removed by the uninterrupted path that preceded it.

Moreover, whatever is a path of release is necessarily one of the three: a path of seeing, a path of meditation, or a path of no-more-learning.

In the case of the Mahayana path of seeing, the path of release arises immediately after the uninterrupted path, when the intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path are indeed eliminated, i.e. when their cessation is attained.

Therefore, as explained above, the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing arises first and eliminates the intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions. The moment they are eliminated, the uninterrupted path becomes the path of release of the Mahayana path of seeing.

Both the uninterrupted path and the path of release of the path of seeing are *direct* antidotes to the intellectually acquired obstructions, since both are responsible for their elimination.

(Please note that whatever is a *direct* antidote to an obstruction is necessarily a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and is responsible for the irrevocable elimination of that obstruction.)

The analogy cited in the scriptures for the uninterrupted path and the path of release is that of disposing of a thief who has broken into one's house. The uninterrupted path is compared to chasing the thief from the house, and the path of release, to closing the door to ensure that he will not return.

